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TWELFTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOURNE

Urban District

FOR THE YEAR 1910,

BY

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MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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BOURNE, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1911.

To the Bourne Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

In making out an Annual Report your Medical Officer, as you will easily understand, cannot help but be influenced, encouraged or otherwise, by the reception accorded to his previous ones and the action taken thereupon. When I remind you that the last Report was taken as read and passed as satisfactory without discussion, and that the suggestions contained in it were entirely ignored, except as to the advised extension of the Sewage Beds, about which a Committee was appointed to attend, but failed to form a quorum, and the matter of Housing Accommodation to which your attention was called by the Local Government Board, you will understand that if I again trouble you briefly by these and other repetitions, I am but carrying out the instructions which I have received.

Curiously enough, one of the opening sentences of my last Report ran "no tale to tell of flood or fire." This year, at any rate, there have been both, for your brigade has been called to quite an abnormal number of fires, and there has been a flood

such as has not been in your district for half a lifetime. Happily the effect upon the health of the district has been trivial, although the death of one poor fellow from pneumonia, no doubt due to worry and exposure to the wet, must be attributed to it. For the rest, almost all who were deprived of their usual livelihood by the flood found compensating employment at the broken bank, and the others were relieved by generous local benefaction. The immediate cause of the breaking of the Glen bank was of course the abnormally heavy and persistent rainfall which no human power could foresee or avert, but in most calamities there is, as in most illnesses, a predisposing cause which in the majority of cases could be removed, or at any rate abated, and I would venture to hint that in this instance a predisposing cause might be found in the multiplicity of Authorities in control of the waterways and drainage of this and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Vital Statistics. In dealing with the Vital Statistics it is needless to recapitulate the reasons given in previous reports why your district would be expected to compare unfavourably with similar semi-rural ones. The total number of deaths of inhabitants, including two who died in Stamford Infirmary, was 74, which gives an average death-rate of 16·7, and is as you will see above the average 15·5 for your district for the last 10 years, and compares with a rate of 13·6 for the remainder of England and Wales (large towns excluded).

Glancing through the causation of death you will see there were 4 cases due to Phthisis; this is not at all a large percentage, and in this respect your district makes a much better showing than in the case of Cancer, under which heading 8 deaths were recorded, the highest number from any one disease, and eleven per cent. of the total number of deaths. Unfortunately the splendid efforts and the attention which has been concentrated by the Medical Profession on this terrible scourge during the last few years have at present met with little satisfactory reward, although that reward may not be far distant, and in the meantime

the only hope of reducing the mortality lies in the early recognition and thorough removal whenever possible.

Although the mortality amongst infants under 1 year of age has in the past year again risen to 17, giving a rate of 162 per thousand births as compared with the average rate for your district of 131 per thousand, this result is due mainly to cases of premature birth and weakly born children, which account for 11 out of the 17.

It is satisfactory to record that the Birth-rate shows a decided improvement, being 25·2 per thousand as compared with the average rate of 23 per thousand, and is accounted for by 111 births registered during 1910, which is the highest figure since the year 1904. It is not so satisfactory to note that 18 or nearly one sixth of the number were not born in wedlock.

Infectious Diseases. There have been during 1910 no serious outbreaks of epidemic disease in your district, but mention should be made of an epidemic of Whooping Cough which resulted in the death of one infant. There was also a series of five cases in Wood View notified as Diphtheria, but they were of a very mild character, and it is doubtful whether a bacteriological examination would have revealed the presence of the bacillus of true Diphtheria. I am glad to say you have now made arrangements with the local medical practitioners for the expert examination of swabs in doubtful cases, and for a supply of Anti-diphtheric germs to be in readiness for immediate use in your district.

The remainder of the cases notified comprise two very slight cases of Scarlatina and four of Erysipelas.

Although there were four deaths attributed to Pulmonary Phthisis, none of these were notified under the Tuberculosis Regulations of 1908, and I should again advise your Council to add this disease to the list of infectious disease notifiable in this district.

Isolation of Infectious Cases. As pointed out in my previous reports your only means of dealing with cases which require removal for their effective isolation is to send them to the Isolation Buildings in Manor Lane, which you still pay the Rural District Council for the right to use and which was considered unsatisfactory in several respects by the Local Government Board Inspector.

The erection and maintenance of an Isolation Hospital would be too serious a charge on such a small district as this, and it seems impossible to come to an understanding with the Rural District Council for a joint Hospital, but I am given to understand that that Council are desirous of selling the Manor Lane Buildings which they have previously refused you, and I would therefore suggest that your Council consider the matter once more.

Housing Accommodation. During the year 1910 six new villas were erected and one shop and dwelling house, all of which were satisfactory as to their sanitary accommodation, but there were no new dwellings suitable for the working classes.

In the autumn you received an enquiry from the Local Government Board as to what steps, if any, you proposed to take in consequence of my previous reports under this heading, and the epitome of your reply thereto was that the district was already well provided in such respect. I cannot however depart from my previously expressed opinion that there are many wage-earners, whose weekly income does not reach 20/-, who now are compelled to pay more for house rent than they can honestly afford because their only other resources are old and dilapidated mud and stud dwellings, or a few jerry-built brick hovels in different parts of the town. I still maintain that dwellings consisting of one good sized living-room, of not less than 15 feet square or its equivalent, with a small kitchen scullery fitted with a copper and a sink, with three bedrooms above (one of which should have a fireplace)

could be erected and let readily by your Council without pecuniary loss at 2/6 per week, which is the maximum sum that a married man earning under 20/- per week should have to expend in house rent.

I have used the word "erected" because it excludes the item of cost of site, for whilst qualified experiences which I have been at pains to gather are at variance as to whether a rental of 2/6 per week would render sufficient return to cover the cost of site and building and repairs, practically all are agreed that given the site there is an ample margin. Such being the case surely the cost of site need not hinder you. Have you not a suitable one already to hand on part of the land recently acquired for the purpose of making what many consider a perfectly useless and unsuitable recreation ground? A part indeed which you have already decided shall not be used for recreation purposes.

It would be well perhaps here to make the reservation that the above suggestions are made on the assumption that such work, material and conditions as would conform with the existing bye-laws would be acceptable for this special purpose to the Central Authorities.

Your Council, having expressed its opinion contrary to mine, was not likely to alter it without further proof, and this I had hoped to furnish by means of the particulars required by the Order under the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. Consequently I scheduled for inspection practically the whole of the dwellings inhabited by the labouring class in your district; this however your Council considered too extensive and the list was returned to me for amendment, but when the particulars of even the curtailed list are put before you they will, I think, show that something better is wanted, something if possible should be done to improve the domiciling of the class of whom I have been writing.

With regard to the improvements in the sanitation of existing houses little has been done, but nine houses have had

their old disgusting privies replaced by proper water closets; there are still the same houses without any separate accommodation of any sort, and I once more express the opinion that in such a district as yours it should be a *sine qua non* that every dwelling should be provided with a separate closet.

Sewage Disposal. Under this heading there is absolutely nothing to record other than was mentioned in my reports of last year and the year previous.

True your Sanitary Committee arranged a meeting at the Sewage Works to discuss the matter, but at the appointed time failed to form a quorum, and the matter has since been in abeyance.

It is my duty however once more to remind you that whilst your abundant water-supply is of course an inestimable boon to your district, that same abundance, or rather that ample portion of it, which reaches the Sewage-beds as 300,000 gallons of dilute sewage daily, is a source of enormous difficulty and the capacity of your beds is ludicrously inadequate according to Local Government Board requirements to deal with such a daily flow of an ordinary character. Taking into consideration the dilute nature of this sewage and the character of the outfall at your disposal I have recommended that at a comparatively small expenditure you could so enlarge the capacity of your tanks as to give much greater resting time in the beds, with the result that the effluent would be greatly improved in character, probably sufficiently under the local conditions.

Water Supply. The water supplied under natural pressure by the Bourne Waterworks Company has been quite satisfactory and there has been no complaint of shortage during the year; it is a pity however that several more bores have been sunk by private owners, since these not only to a certain extent cripple the powers of the Waterworks Company, but at the same time increase the waste, and must be to a certain extent detrimental to the pressure of the whole district.

Dairies, During the year there has been one milk-seller
Bakehouses added to the register bringing the number up to
and eight; the Dairies and Milk-shops have been
Slaughter- periodically inspected, the milk has been uniformly
houses. good and there have been no grounds for complaint,
 the working of the Bye-laws in this respect has
 resulted in a great difference from the conditions of a year or two
 ago.

The Slaughter-houses have been systematically inspected and have been found clean and in conformity with the regulations and there has been no cause for action to be taken in respect of tuberculous meat.

The Bakehouses also were regularly inspected and found satisfactory except in three instances where fault had to be found with the white-washing and floor cleaning.

Refuse There is still room for much improvement in this
Disposal. respect, and that your Council has recognised it is
 proved by the fact that in the earlier part of the year it
 was your resolve to adopt a system of house to house collection, by
 means of your own carts and horses, although this has I under-
 stand subsequently been rescinded, and for such a decision there
 is much to be argued. The number of houses without sufficient
 refuse accommodation is small and the complaint that there was
 nowhere to remove it to you have now remedied; so as I have
 before pointed out to you the "*rus in urbe*" character in your
 district should be taken into consideration, and the question forces
 itself on one's mind whether it is right in such a case to charge
 the greater portion of the community for a privilege which they
 do not want and will not use in order that the minority may be
 relieved of a public duty at the expense of their neighbours. To me
 it seems that by insistence that existing ash-bins shall be properly
 constructed, covered, and regularly emptied, and by strict sur-

veillance and a little co-operation by the road scavengers in the cases where accommodation is lacking, your district can be spared the expense which the staff and equipment necessary for a house to house removal would entail.

Nuisances. According to the report of your Inspector during the year there were 108 notices served on different owners and occupiers in the district, the chief of which were for dirty and overflowing privies, uncovered or overflowing ashpits and deposits of refuse in open yards. In addition there were—

8 for defective drainage to houses.

2 for absence of drainage.

16 for filthy pig-styes.

5 for depositing filth on the highway.

9 for polluting the Bourne Eau in the Union Road.

In addition, 86 letters were written for small nuisances which were at once abated.

I have to record that the houses previously reported as without separate closet communication remain still in the same condition and that the row of houses reported as causing a nuisance from their uncovered ash-bins are still as before.

Workshops The number of these remain the same as last
and year, and there are now 18 on the register. They
Workplaces. have been systematically inspected, and in four instances there was lack of cleanliness, which on being complained of was at once remedied.

The usual tables dealing with Vital Statistics, Infant Mortality, Infectious Disease, and Factories and Workshops, will be found appended.

I am, Gentlemen,

Obediently yours,

W. J. GILPIN.